

Concord School
6309 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-12

HABS
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61-GERM
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PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

THE CONCORD SCHOOLHOUSE
Germantown Avenue above Washington Lane
Germantown, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Owner - Board of Trustees, H. E. Unruh, Secretary.
18 West Chelton Avenue, Germantown.

Date of Erection - 1775

Present Condition - Fair state of preservation.
What repairs are necessary to keep building weather tight are made from time to time. With the exception of some new sash and modern interior doors it retains its original appearance.

Number of Stories - 2½

Materials of Construction - Foundations, stone; floors, wood; exterior walls, stone; interior walls, frame; roof, shingle.

Existing Records - Minutes of Board of Trustees, in custody of Secretary.

Additional Data - On March 24, 1775 was held a meeting of the residents of the upper part of Germantown, who complained that the Union School (the old name of the Germantown Academy) was too far away to send their children, especially in severe winter weather, to "Promote the Building and Erecting a Convenient School house and Establishing an English School in that part of the town". Contributions were quickly obtained, a site purchased and the quaint little building erected and "nearly Completed by the Latter End of October the same year fit for School which was first opened and kept by John Grimes, Schoolmaster."

From 1775 to 1785 no minutes were kept by the trustees and we are left in doubt as to whether the Schoolhouse was open to scholars, but as this period was a time of storm and stress and great uncertainty and anxiety there is good reason for this silence.

In 1840 the public school system was established and as no public school building was available, the School Board of the Township occupied the Concord Schoolhouse and

paid rent until January 1, 1843. While at various times the building or part of it has been rented for private school purposes it can be truthfully stated that the year 1840 marks the end of the career of the Schoolhouse as an institution of learning in its strict technical sense and under its own auspices.

From 1821 to 1823 the upper floor was occupied by the Hiram Lodge of the Masonic Order. In 1847 the Senior Order of the United American Mechanics rented the upper floor and six years later - 1853 - the building witnessed the birth of the Junior Order of the United American Mechanics, a thriving organization, having branches now in nearly every state in the union. In 1903 the Site and Relic Society (now the Germantown Historical Society) used the lower floor for a permanent exhibition of relics, where they remained until 1908 when they moved to "Vernon". Since that time the building has been untenanted.

Every Fourth of July at 5 o'clock in the morning the bell is rung, the number of times corresponding to the years of our independence. The custom was started about 1836 when the bell is supposed to have been purchased by subscription and hung in the belfry.

The origin of the name "Concord" offers a problem. No explanation is given in the minutes. Why was it called Concord? Was it because the first band of settlers from Holland and Germany came over in the ship "Concord", or was it because its foundations were laid at the time when "the shot that was heard around the world" was being fired at Concord? The first explanation is tenable, the second is not, for, while the foundations were laid after the battle of Concord, April 19, 1775, the meeting to organize the school occurred in March, 1775, nearly a month before Concord was heard of, except perhaps as a geographical name.

This account is from an address delivered before the Site and Relic Society of Germantown by Dr. William N. Johnson, President of the Board of Trustees, November 30, 1925, and published in the Germantown Magazine, "The Beehive" December 1925.

S. Perot Beall

District Officer.